Researching ‘Bogus’ Asylum Seekers, ‘Illegal’ Migrants and ‘Crimmigrants’.

Dr Monish Bhatia

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Researching 'Bogus' Asylum Seekers, 'Illegal' Migrants and 'Crimmigrants'[1].

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Introduction

Both immigration and criminal laws are, at their core, systems of inclusion and exclusion. They are designed to determine whether and how to include individuals as members of society or exclude them from it; thereby, creating insiders and outsiders (Stumpf, 2006). Both are designed to create distinct categories of people - innocent versus guilty, admitted versus excluded or, as majority would say, 'legal' versus 'illegal' (ibid). Viewed in that light, perhaps it is not surprising that these two areas of law have become inextricably connected in the official discourses. When politicians and policymakers (and also law enforcement authorities and tabloid press) seek to raise the barriers for noncitizens to attain membership in society, it is unremarkable that they turn their attention to an area of the law that similarly functions to exclude and 'other' – transforming immigrants into crimmigrants. As a criminology researcher one then has to rise up to the challenges of disentangling these so-called officially constructed (pseudo) realities, and breaking free from a continued dominance of authoritative discourses, and developing an alternative understanding of 'crimmigration' by connecting the processes of criminalisation and 'othering' with poverty, xeno-racism and other forms of social exclusion (also see Sivanandan, 2002; Fekete, 2001; Bowling and Phillips, 2002; Weber and Bowling, 2004; Richmond, 1994; Institute of Race Relations, 1987).

[1] Term was first used by Juliet Stumpf in the article: *The Crimmigration Crisis: Immigrants, Crime, and Sovereign Power* , 56 AM. U. L. REV. 367 (2006).

Criminology has to constantly strive for an inclusionary vision that is connected to debates in human rights, democratic accountability, and social justice (Barton, Corteen, Scott and Whyte, 2007). To facilitate this, alternative methodologies such as, peace-making, feminist, activist and participatory action research (to list a few) have emerged, offering a counter-discourse and challenging the status quo. They are increasingly employed to uncover state and structural violence, human suffering, and inequalities of marginalised and oppressed groups. While considerations of these methodologies are not new, their (re)emergence within criminology strongly coincides with the sixth and seventh moments of qualitative inquiry (Yuen, 2011; Denzin and Lincoln, 2000), and **emotions** are given prime importance within these moments (discussed in the next section).

This chapter has two-fold aims. It not only draws upon emotions to demonstrate how it can provide a navigation tool for researchers, drive critical criminological knowledge and help in exposing state brutality and injustice against crimmigrants; but it also outlines the ethical and methodological dilemmas faced while conducting sensitive qualitative research with marginalised and vulnerable groups. The chapter offers rigorous and in-depth analysis of my field experiences and of my emotions. I have extensively drawn upon the *research journal* (from now on referred to as RJ) to aid clarity in reflections.

Why turn to emotional reflexivity?

> Forty years ago there seem to have been more scientists; now there appear to be more selves.
>
> **(Mintz 1989:793)**

The use of the academic 'self' in the data collection process brings the researcher close to the real life experiences of vulnerable participants, and it also helps in capturing the

multidimensionality and intricacy of such experiences (Rew, Bechtel, and Sapp, 1993). The (sub) conscious attempt to establish a connection with the participants for data collection purposes results in the researcher developing an empathetic lens, which enables the visualisation of the world from the insider's point of view. However, this type of close and regular engagement with participants in the field settings raises both practical and ethical challenges related to the issues of blurring boundaries (Watts, 2008). Becoming exposed to the raw words and vulnerability of participants can also make it difficult for the researcher to act as an 'omnipotent expert', who is expected to be in control of the 'passive' research subjects and the research process. Further, the role of the 'self' in field settings (i.e. the traditional understanding of the academic self) as an impartial outsider, detached, distanced, freed of personality and bias, might become difficult to sustain when confronted with injustice, pain and human suffering, which affect the researcher emotionally. Instead of disguising or blocking these emotions, and considering it as a threat to objectivity, one must actively acknowledge its role in the research process and production of knowledge. As Hochschild (1983) suggests, emotions have a 'signal function' just as hearing and seeing, which acts as clues 'in figuring out what is real' (1983:31).

Similarly, while highlighting the link between knowledge production and emotions, Wilkins (1993) argues that "... our emotional responses constitute key cognitive and analytic resources in the 'here and now' of the research setting and are capable of yielding important sociological insights" (1993:94). She also mentions that such responses may aid sophisticated sensibility in two ways:

> … Firstly, properly understood, they have a sensitising, cognitive function which alerts us to the meanings and behaviours of others. They make possible a sensitive attunement predicated on our capacity to empathise, which in turn depends upon our personal and emotional resources. Secondly, a sophisticated

> sensibility, grounded in our emotional responses, has an important interpretive function. It is a medium through which intuitive insight and inchoate knowledge arise, and this in turn depends on the availability of similar emotions and/or experience...
>
> **(Wilkins: 1993:96)**

Whilst an emotional way of knowing may be contrasted with an 'objective', 'scientific' approach, it is more appropriate to perceive our emotional and cognitive functioning as inseparable (Hubbard, Backett-Milburn and Kemmer, 2010).

Since research is part of an evolving process and not just a finished product, it entails reflecting on and learning from field experiences, being able to analyse/re-evaluate our roles critically, and perhaps our emotions, which can induce self-discovery, insights and new hypothesis about the research questions. It may also help us 'confront seriously and thoroughly the problems that these topics pose' (Lee and Renzetti, 1993:10 referring to the sensitive topics). Keeping this in mind, chapter focuses on emotionality, ethical problems that arose during various stages of the fieldwork, and my position to those who were researched. However, the following section provides brief information about my research.

My Research

My research titled: *Resisting 'Bare-Life'? Impacts of Policies and Procedures on Asylum Seekers and 'Illegal' Migrants*, examined the impacts of UKs immigration policies and procedures on asylum seekers and 'illegal' migrants. It draws upon their experiences of living in the empty bureaucratic space and shows the ways in which they have used their agency to 'resist' and overcome the controls that render them as 'bare-life'. The study narrated their experiences of the British criminal justice and immigration systems, the treatment they received in hands of the authorities, the violence and abuse they endured in detention centres and while getting forcefully deported from the UK, and the travesty of justice they received in from courts. I employed qualitative methodologies and in-depth interviews with twenty

two asylum seekers and six specialist practitioners. By embedding myself as a volunteer support worker with three refugee organisations over a period of eighteen months, I was able to access research participants and interact with state authorities, and gathered a rich qualitative data set. The following sections offer narratives of my field experiences.

On the fine line of academic boundaries

The most challenging aspect of the research was adopting the role of a volunteer worker. The role helped in capturing a kaleidoscopic image of the world. It required a commitment, perseverance and a great deal of patience. I had no experience of the asylum system or working with the asylum seekers, and it was somehow difficult to anticipate the outcomes of being in an environment that extensively assists these individuals. There was a constant fear of "whether this role would obstruct my data collection process and make me go native" (RJ 11/09). As I progressed further with the role, the amount of time spent on the case work directly contributed to my understanding of the system, however, it also triggered a feeling of frustration and exhaustion, and on one occasion the clash of roles resulted in *severe confusion*. During January 2010, I was assisting Bukola[2] (pseudonym), who had seven days to complete a form and present it to the *Court of Appeal*. She did not have any legal assistance, funds or time to go through the referral process. I agreed to assist her, as noted in the RJ:

> ... I was extremely worried of the consequences and that she might get detained [again]... she kept crying and reminding me of her 20 week old premature baby... to some extent I was also feeling obligated, as she trusted me with her story and

[2] I had previously assisted Bukola in writing a complaint to the accommodation provider regarding an electrical problem. A few days later and after a few conversations, an interview session was arranged. During her visit in February 2010, she precisely mentioned about 'feeling exhausted' of talking to people about her problems and repeatedly being ignored. I was requested to act as a middle-man, due to having detailed knowledge of the case and her personal circumstances (obtained during case work and followed by an interview). I was given the consent to discuss the case with the senior case worker and relevant external organisations.

> kept saying repeatedly 'you are like my brother – help me please!'... she also mentioned about the feeling of embarrassment and emotional exhaustion that she encountered by repeatedly telling various organisations details of her situation [including the time she was forced into prostitution and raped]... and then being turned down and refused help... the researcher side of me kept insisting to protect such vulnerable subjects... The compassionate side of me wanted to offer unconditional help... I had to take advantage of my position as a volunteer to overcome this dilemma and anxiety...
>
> **(RJ 02/10)**

However, due to my lack of knowledge and experience of the appeal process, I had to forward this case to the senior case worker. This legal instrument was beyond his expertise as well and he therefore advised me to contact the Immigration Law Centre and make an urgent referral. Some of the staff members at the Law Centre were aware that I was a Doctoral researcher. On calling the Law Centre, I explained the case and difficulties encountered in filling the form[3]. The confusion of my volunteer and research roles spilled over in the conversation. Also, the communication was greatly affected due to excessive background noise at the drop-in session, and the Law Centre staff assumed that I (as a Doctoral researcher) was attempting to submit an important legal instrument which could have serious repercussions for the asylum seeking woman and her premature baby. The Law Centre staff member discussed this issue with a colleague at the University (who also happened to be her friend) without first discussing the matter with myself, which would have enabled me the opportunity to provide an explanation. The colleague then raised her concerns directly to senior members of the department, with the effect of escalating the situation. I was called for a meeting and confronted regarding my ethical practices. Further, concerns were raised that I was getting in 'too deep' and crossing my academic boundaries. All those involved had to be

[3] I was requested by the senior case worker not to mention his name while making this referral (for reasons unexplained). He also insisted that I do not include the organisation's name; however, I turned down this request. The lack of clarity of the situation and roles made it difficult for me to convey the information in a consistent manner.

provided with a detailed explanation/clarification of the circumstances/situation (including the Law Centre staff)[4].

A few days after the incident I had an opportunity to reflect and analyse my emotional reactions, and record it in my journal:

> ... absolutely horrifying... I was scared that the issue will reach the ethics committee... and my practices will be subjected to scrutiny... having just initiated the interview process, this was the least thing I was expecting... I was baffled to see the number of people who got involved due to the confusion caused by the lack of clarity in my roles... those who agreed to offer help were surprised by the intensity of the situation... and the fact that the ethics on the ground can be challenging and totally different to what we mention on the forms... and sympathised with me, i.e. a PhD student, who had to take tough decisions in precarious and unexpected situations... on one hand my mind was filled with fear... that my research will get paused and I will have to make a fresh application to the ethics committee... on the other hand I was just stressed finding ways to resolve this problem... I had over a week of an emotional roller coaster... the pressure of dealing with people... panic and anxiety... which in the end affected my confidence... making me think negatively and encouraging pessimistic thoughts.
>
> **(RJ 04/10)**

At this stage it turned absolutely necessary to disentangle the academic and volunteer roles, without neglecting the assistance requests made by vulnerable participants. Therefore, to solve the ethical dilemma, I decided to adopt a *binary strategy*[5] and started getting involved in the capacity of a secondary case worker. The lead case/social worker owned the case, and responsibilities were equally divided between us (or vice versa). Interviewees were referred back to the lead (or secondary) case/social workers, if they had any problems or presented any issues at all that could interfere with my role as a researcher. Nevertheless, *"... memory of this entire incident left me feeling paranoid... whenever I encountered a difficult situation,*

[4] The Law Centre staff refused to provide assistance, as they were facing shortage of staff. A senior case worker was requested to write a letter to the court requesting for extension of the time limit, which was eventually granted. The client was referred to several other agencies who offered her support and assistance, as organisation A had reduced service provisions (explained in the previous chapter).

finding a solution turned twice as challenging and stressful... until last month I found it difficult to trust social worker A and B... and had a strange feeling that I was being observed... and assumed they were sceptical of my practices... Both of them later made me aware of my strengths, capabilities and problem solving skills..." (RJ 07/10). This incident was discussed during the de-briefing sessions at the University Occupational Therapist, with an aim to restore my optimism and confidence.

Becoming a co-victim of suppression

The rapport-building process created a trust-based relationship and closeness with the participants, encouraging disclosure during the interview; however, this relationship occasionally positioned me on the edge of academic boundaries, and made me feel like a *bystander* who observes the victims of injustice, but keeps walking without immediate intervention. For instance: Gracie (pseudonym) was facing mental health deterioration due to the electronic tag, which was attached to her leg for longer than six months. She had a 4 year old son and was not able to leave the house for 8-12 hours or go to public places without worrying about the tag getting visible and/or being judged. She mentioned being called a 'paedo' by a group of teenagers, when the tag was accidently visible. After the interview I really wanted to help, as noted in the RJ:

> After the interview, I really felt that something needs to be done, as the punishment was unfair and not justified... she kept asking for help... I wanted to write a strongly worded letter to the security company and UKBA officials requesting to remove this tag... but I could not stop thinking about the consequences of crossing the boundaries of a researcher... I referred her to the social workers... I was later told that RCOs cannot write letters requesting to reduce such a punishment... there was a constant fear that if at all individuals abscond, RCOs could be held liable by the UKBA... however, on the participants request, the social worker wrote a letter highlighting that the 'organisation had no legal expertise' and the letter was written 'on behalf of the client explaining her current situation'... (RJ 04/10) ... eventually the letter was not considered by the UKBA... and eight weeks on, she still remained tagged with a hope to hear

> back from the authorities... (RJ 06/10)[6]... she requested me for assistance [again] and I referred her to the legal advisor and a mental health charity... the circumstances made me feel trapped in the victim-bystander cycle, where being a bystander was making me feel like a co-victim of suppression... and this just added to my on-going feeling of frustration and powerlessness [written 1 week prior to commencing the debriefing sessions].
>
> **(RJ 07/10)**

Each time when I felt that stress and discomfort was of a higher intensity than usual, I pulled myself out from the interviewing process and re-scheduled future interviews. Such a delay helped to significantly minimise the cumulative effect of facing too much data and too many emotions at any one point. This also created extra time for reflection, increasing the depth of the analysis as opposed to a brief cursory examination because of the emotional pain.

On one occasion my reaction was completely opposite to the one faced above. I had interviewed two female asylum seekers during the month of May 2010, both single mothers, who had completed their prison term. However, at the same time, I was doing case work with other asylum seekers – as noted:

> ... today was the first time I did not get affected by clients' emotions... and instead of feeling glad, I am getting concerned... when she cried [referring to a client] I gave her a tissue and kept writing preliminary case notes... until my conscience started to sting... and then I offered her a brew with a big smile... I did not feel what I usually feel... and that smile was not very real... now I am thinking of that incident... it is making me feel very uneasy, and perhaps very guilty. I really hope what I have built so far is not collapsing... my empathy threshold must not turn weak... it is impossible to research sensitive topics... if you are not sensitive to the individuals you encounter... being sensitive is a pre-requisite quality...and perhaps mandatory, when conducting research with this group... I must not turn into a robot that collects 'facts'…
>
> **(RJ 05/10)**

[6] Ali, Rizwan, Ikeoluwa were tagged. All the respondents were carrying copies of letters written by their respective GPs and immigration solicitors. None of these letters were acknowledged by the Home Office.

I discussed this incident with my colleague, and decided to indulge in social activities for couple days [what she described as 'clear your head'].

I felt confinement!

My preparation with regards to the fieldwork largely involved planning and constructing strategies to protect the research participants from harm. The research methodology literature does not fully address the emotional impacts on the researcher of prolonged contact with this particular group and I was uncertain of the intensity and depth of suffering, and the extent to which such disclosures could affect me as a person. Throughout the fieldwork it was noted that those who interacted with the AS on a regular basis faced a surge of emotions[7] when confronted with extreme suffering; for instance Mariam (RCO manager at organisation A; Pseudonym) once mentioned: *"...did you see his sad eyes? It was just painful to listen what he is going through... I have been doing this for 7 years and can't do it anymore... my blood pressure is always high and the doctor keeps prescribing me tablets for anxiety... I should switch it off, but it is hard!...I am going part-time very soon, maybe 1 day a week... can't do it – just can't do it anymore (crying)..."* (RJ 03/10). Whereas, Social Worker Beth (pseudonym) mentioned that: *"... I feel jaded and worn out... I feel about 10 years older... sometimes I just sit in my garden and think about my cases and what they have gone through... not that I want to, but sometimes it's your brain which does not give up on the thinking...."* (RJ 01/11). After the initial five months in field, I started to experience a similar lack of ability to 'switch it off', as thinking, reflecting, acting, planning and analysing were crucial aspects of the research process, and these elements advanced when the data collection process gained a momentum.

[7] This is also termed as 'soul sadness' (Niederland, 1081:420) and it is often faced by the therapists (or those involved in human services) who regularly work with trauma victims or those suffering from depression.

On one occasion I was following Social Worker Anita (pseudonym) on a home visit and to conduct health assessment of a male asylum seeker called Iqbal (pseudonym). The purpose of the visit was to assess his health condition and to implement suicide prevention and well-being strategies[8]. I decided not to interview the participant, as he was suffering from active suicidal thoughts and had to recourse to the Crises Team after a failed suicide attempt, and in-depth qualitative interview had a potential to cause further emotional distress. However, I was granted access for the observation purposes. As I entered the property[9]:

> I saw a poorly looking man, wearing a soiled track suit bottom and old jumper, standing around the door (not entirely outside) to welcome us …he pushed the door slowly and gently to let us in… he was weak and frail …as I walked in, I was overwhelmed by the smell … there were unwashed clothes hanging on rusty metal hooks… there was a broken refrigerator in one corner … on top of the refrigerator there was a microwave and on top of the microwave there was a small old television and on top of the television there was an old 1980s style radio … all of which were covered in dust and not in active use... that tiny space was his living room, bed room and kitchen... On the other corner was Iqbal's bed … beside his bed was a small table, where he kept cocktail of anti-depressants and pain killers … I was sitting on a damp chair, opposite to his bed… I could see a carton of smelly curdled milk, rotten banana and dried pomegranate lying on the floor… room was dark even with a tube light switched on…Social Worker Anita started asking few procedural questions so as to establish his mood and whether he was exhibiting any active suicidal thoughts. He replied back to every question after a 30 second pause … he stated in a low voice *"sometimes voices ask me, they ask me to end my life and it is very difficult to control!"* His eyes were on the floor while replying to the questions … occasionally when he made an eye contact, his eyes started to water immediately… he mentioned about severe lack of interest in outdoor activities and that he hasn't left those four walls in weeks … in past he was taken to the Crises Team twice due to suicide attempts … on both the occasions doctors increased the strength of his medication and granted discharge the same day…and he continues to exhibit suicidal thoughts and has no interest in life or living…he repeatedly asked about the asylum case and

[8] The social workers at charity organisation employed several individualised techniques so as to reduce the risk of self-harm amongst asylum seekers. These techniques include (but not limited to) helping them secure voluntary employment in their area of expertise and skills, allotment projects, walks in park, tea meetings, home visits and be-friending, language class and in some cases helping them seek access to trained psychologists.

[9] Iqbal was a destitute asylum seeker. However, a member of a refugee community provided him with space to live in his family home. The room appeared to be a storage space converted into a bedroom, which is one reason why it was compact, effectively outside of the house and guarded by a metal gate and a door.

> whether social worker heard anything back from the solicitor or UKBA… he kept mentioning that it has been too long and he wants decision on the case… it became apparent from the conversation … only thing mattered to him the most was becoming recognised as a refugee and having a 'legal' status in the UK… he mentioned about being full of life and happy in the past… and now being reduced down to a corpse like state… after the initial 15 minutes, I began to experience stomach discomfort and wanted to vomit …this was not triggered due to the overpowering smell or the conversation about death and dying or state of the room … It was due to the fact that I *felt* his confinement and the feeling was extremely powerful. I was not in a detention centre, I was not in a prison and I was not physically confined to a space against my will…but as he started talking about asylum case and pointless existence … I felt his pain, I felt his suffering, I felt his frustration, I felt his helplessness, I felt his hopelessness, I felt his lifeless existence, I felt the dark empty space – I felt confinement, without becoming physically confined.
>
> **(RJ 09/11)**

As soon as we left the premises, I had a de-briefing chat with Social Worker Anita in order to 'break free'. As a criminologist, it opened up a new area for analysis and a curiosity to know ways in which system confines asylum seekers – one which goes beyond physical imprisonment or detention.

Ethnic identity and trust

Throughout my fieldwork I repeatedly questioned myself as to why participants (on most occasions) willingly and openly disclosed sensitive details about their past, present and future. I often reduced every trusted revelation as an outcome of being able to empathise. However, the dynamics behind forming strong rapport and trust based relationship were far more complex:

> ... it was very hard to understand the dynamics of rapport building... and what was making me trusted? Was it because I was a volunteer worker, who had knowledge and understanding of the problems they face?... was it because I was a student who strongly believes in human rights and that makes individuals feel morally obligated to bestow me with their trust?... was it because of my personality and body language... or because of my colour and ethnic origins... or merely due to me turning into a 'known face'... whom they encountered every week same time-same place? To become trustworthy, one

has to prove his worth and integrity... and throughout the course of fieldwork... I have been analysing ways in which this can/has been proved...

(RJ 04/10)

There were times when I was left stunned by the responses from the participants and clients who approached me for assistance, but nevertheless, such responses unveiled the various positions in which they saw me. For example, a male asylum seeker from Iran once asked me:

Participant: Where are your parents from?

Researcher: India

Participant: You been living here for long?

Researcher: Yes, close to 10 years

Participant: as long as me then [smile]. Do you have Indefinite Leave to Remain?

Researcher: [after 30 second pause] Nope [smile]
[Participant then pats my back, gives me a vague look, smiles and walks away]

(RJ 11/10)

After this incident, the participant made regular visits to the organisation and always initiated a friendly conversation (both of which he never did before). He often shared troubles and occasionally asked for assistance. After organisation A closed, I encountered him on a few occasions while walking to the University, and each time he made a point to stop and strike a friendly conversation about the research and life in general. To be honest;

...initially this incident made me feel very uncomfortable...I was not sure how to react... I was not ready or willing to disclose any aspect of my personal life with the participants... and certainly did not feel the need for a pat...and still not sure what that look meant...however, during the course of the research I realised that a certain amount of disclosure was necessary to balance the power relations...and help them [referring to participants] locate something in common with the researcher...I also realised that, just the way I was

> uncomfortable with disclosures...participants might be going through similar feelings while disclosing their vulnerabilities...and hoping that researcher... will not judge them... if one is expecting truth and authenticity from the participants... and hoping that...they will be honest in their self-portrayal...then one has to follow a similar principle...and not be afraid of getting judged...also [with regards to the legal status], I found it necessary to be honest as most of them either assumed that I was born in Britain or a refugee...on more than few occasions I revealed my legal status as a tool for neutralising power...empowerment...and gaining access as an insider...and their trust...
>
> **(RJ 05/11)**

This cultural identity, on a rare occasion, made me strongly connect with one participant. I happened to get introduced to a young Afghani man at a community centre, who was, as mentioned by one of the asylum seekers as being "in need of help". Initially I was not sure of the ethical implications of initiating one such (un-invited) conversation as a researcher or voluntary worker *"... but then I was told that he is only 15... He looked really young and lost... just felt like talking to him and check whether he is doing ok... it would have been unethical to refuse to initiate such a conversation... I decided to introduce myself as a PhD student... and hoped that he will talk"* (RJ 01/10). During the chat he mentioned about the asylum case, which had been recently refused. He also stated that social services have wrongly assessed his age as 19. When I asked him about the accommodation, he replied: *"sometime with one friend... sometime with other... sometime when I get work, I sleep in garage"* (RJ 01/10). When I questioned him regarding work, he replied *"rubbish work".* After a 10 minute chat he drifted away and got back to me when I was sitting alone. He requested me to call the social services and arrange for a re-assessment of his age. I was *"...in a situation where refusal was not an option any more... not that he would have felt let down... but I couldn't do it... he was wrongly considered as an adult by the Department of Social Services and wanted me to arrange for an appointment"* (RJ 01/10). On calling the Department of Social Services and explaining the situation, an employee said:

Employee: Have we assessed his age as 19 (?)...

Researcher: Yes. Ok, but he is not 19... He certainly does not look 19... Could you not re-assess his age?

Employee: May I ask what makes you think he is under 16...?

Researcher: This underage lad is Asian and I am Asian, so it is easy for me to figure out whether he is under 16 or not... Sorry, but he does not agree to this age... says he is 15... I would support your decision, but firmly believe that he is under 16years of age.

Employee: ... we use robust interviewing techniques to determine age... If the senior social workers have assessed him as 19, then he is 19!

Researcher: Can you not connect me to one of your senior social workers? I am not saying their judgement is wrong... but there could be an error with this one...? Can you let me know how to go about with this?

Employee: We have had this problem in the past. See, they have to prove their age prior to accessing any sort of child support... and they don't carry a passport or birth certificate with them... I understand what you are saying, but we have made this decision. If at all you want to raise this matter further, I suggest that you follow the complaint procedures mentioned on our website.

Researcher: I just want to let you know that he is very vulnerable and homeless...

Employee: As I said, if you have evidence of his age then write to us and we will re-assess him.

Researcher: Can they not send him for a medical examination or something? I am sure doctors could help in making such difficult decisions?

Employee: As far as I know, they [referring to the doctor] give us an age range and then we have to do the interview again to determine the exact age...

Researcher: So unless he gets evidence of the right age, he will be considered as an adult? Can you please... please... help him out on this one...? I can't explain you over the phone, but he is very vulnerable.

Employee: Sorry, if I knew how to conduct an age interview, I would do it for you. But this decision is not in my hands...

(RJ – date unknown)

During the eighteen months of fieldwork, I observed three unaccompanied minors, who went through the age determination process and were considered as adults. In two of the cases

(including the current one), I *felt* that the individuals were under the age of 16, but had been placed in the adult asylum system. All the three asylum cases were refused even before these 'pseudo' children had a chance to contest their age via legal means. My reactions to this case were noted in the RJ:

> ... during the conversation he was sitting on a small table fidgeting with a pen and a piece of paper... drawing random faces... he spoke in a very squeaky voice... I sensed straightaway that he is young and nervous... and felt that it would be better if I give him space... but after 30 minutes or so... he started talking... it was really shocking to hear the places that he visited in an attempt to sell sex... most of the times such attempts were unsuccessful... and he was afraid to go ahead... other times individuals refused, as he looked underage... those who were willing... questioned his age... and he mentioned the one determined by the social services... I [reluctantly] asked him regarding the types of activities he is involved in... and he refused to answer... had no idea as to what is HIV, STD or STI... and had never seen a GP... a 'pseudo child' who accepted the pseudo identity given by the state authorities... and now using this new pseudo identity for survival... it had only been 5-6 weeks since he started this work... and attended 3 clients... I was experiencing this very unusual protecting instinct... one that an elder brother would experience... and worst, my first attempt to protect him failed... eventually I booked him an appointment with the GP and insisted to see social workers and visit a local charity organisation... since his legal age was determined 19... he was outside the child protection framework...
>
> **(RJ 01/10)**

After a few weeks he called me[10] to inform that social workers had signposted him to a solicitor. The solicitor appealed against the UKBA decision, which was successful, and he was eventually accepted as a 16 year old after re-assessment. They provided him with a room in a shared house and he is now waiting for a decision. He also mentioned about not pursuing sex-work any further.

My position in this situation was exclusive. The fact that participant called from a 'withheld number', and made a request that his mobile number should not be noted (if it was displayed

[10] He requested that his name and mobile number should not be noted.

at all), indicated a lack of trust. Further, he refused participation in the interview, which according to me, was due to his lack of acceptance of me as an insider. Whilst I got slightly carried away due to a combination of factors (i.e. the age of the participant, his ethnicity and vulnerability), this relationship was not entirely reciprocal. Very strangely *"... when I introduced myself as a PhD student... and then got tangled up in brotherly feelings... I started believing that... he will agree to further participation... and assumed... 'trust' has somewhat been achieved...I was not being selfish or manipulative... but making a default (and rather faulty) assumption... that all the people of colour will trust me... as we have something in common... which will make us understand each other well..."* (RJ 03/10).

Conclusion: Is my research 'scientific' enough?

> Emotional connectedness to process and practices of fieldwork is normal and appropriate. It should not be denied or stifled. It should be acknowledged, reflected upon and seen as a fundamental feature of well executed research. Having no connection to the research endeavour, setting or people is indicative of a poorly executed project.
>
> **(Coffey 1999:159).**

When we get emotionally affected by daily events in the field, we not only become aware of our own selves, but also aware of others who surround us. By acknowledging the emotional responses, I largely became alert to the world surrounding me, which also induced a sense of curiosity and a craving for knowledge and truth. Since emotions had become epistemologically relevant, almost like a navigation system, it was difficult to keep them hidden in a box with a fear of becoming rated as 'unscientific', *"...every tear... and every shiver meant something... and I used this to the betterment of this research... at times it felt as if I am 'objectifying' my emotions... and doing exactly what I was escaping from... however, not reflecting on emotions deeply... and thoughtfully... would have rendered a threat to this*

research... and perhaps ruin the 'scientific' value, credibility... and quality of the data..." (RJ 01/11).

In this chapter I have shown how emotions can be connected to the processes and practices in the fieldwork, in order to make a well-executed and rigorous criminological research. I have also raised ways in which they can assist a researcher in understanding and uncovering state crime, structural violence and oppression of marginalised and excluded groups. Finally I have addressed ways in which emotions can inform critical criminology and challenge the mainstream, vulgar, positivist agenda, which over the years have continued to established themselves on an obnoxious claim that their research is 'scientific' and 'value free':

> How and why does hiding emotions and subjectivities make a research 'scientific' and acknowledging it makes a research 'unscientific'? It is like saying … being honest and subjective is bad … and being dishonest and objective is good? I rather turn into an 'unscientific' but honest academic … rather then turning into an 'objective' robot, collecting 'facts', pretending to lack emotions... Emotionally intelligent humans are far more superior then those having so-called high IQ levels. I have proved it!
>
> **(RJ 09/12)**

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